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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the connection between workplace relationships and teacher development. Drawing on the first year of a 2-year qualitative study of teacher socialization, the paper explores the questions: With whom do beginning teachers form relationships in their new professional contexts? What is the nature of these relationships? What functions do they serve? Are some relationships more important than others? How do certain relationships facilitate or constrain various aspects of teacher development? Can facilitating relationships be contrived? What is the role of context? Conversations were held with 13 new teachers in 1 school over a 7-month period to explore the ways the new teachers were helped by the administrators and experienced teachers in the school, which uses a collegial, informal model to initiate new teachers. The discussion of the new teachers' input focuses on the psychosocial aspects of teacher development, and considers the various developmental opportunities that have been provided these 13 new teachers and how these opportunities have contributed to the new teachers' growth. The paper questions the viability of imposed teacher induction relationships and advocates an approach that takes into account the individuality of the teacher, the school culture, and the socialization process. (Author/AMH)

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RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE:
DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY?

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RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE: DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY?

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Abstract

In this paper I explore the connection between workplace relationships and teacher development. Using a conceptual framework built on Brim's (1966) ideas on self-socialization and Erickson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development I draw on information gathered in year one of a two year qualitative study of teacher socialization to explore the following questions: With whom do beginning teachers form relationships in their new professional contexts? What is the nature of these relationships? What functions do they serve? Are some relationships more important at some times than others? How dó certain relationships facilitate or constrain the various aspects of teacher development? Can facilitating relationships be contrived? Can contrived relationships be facilitating? And, finally, what role does context play in all of this?

The focus on relationships grows out of a need to better understand the role of the "other" in the professional growth process. By examining information gathered through conversations with 13 new teachers I will uncover and explore some of the issues pertaining to professional relationship formation and development particularly in relation to teacher socialization and the psychosocial aspects of teacher development. These insights will be used as a basis for a discussion of formalized induction programs which feature forms of institutionally imposed collaborative arrangements. Drawing on some of the recent work on teacher culture and collegiality (Hargreaves, 1990; Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1987, 1989), Barth's (1990) ideas on school improvement through the creation of a "community of learners", and on Noddings' (1986) and Gherke's (1987) notions on the building of caring and helping communities, I will discuss the limitations of some of the recent trends in professional development for new teachers. I will recommend an alternative approach to new teacher induction, one that takes into account the individuality of the teacher, the school culture, and the socialization process. In essence, I will argue for a "natural" and integrated approach to teacher induction.

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE: DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY?

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> Just like having friends. You develop friendships with many different people and [the relationships] are all different. You decide who your friends are and you know the kind of friends they are--some friends you confide in and some you don't. Friends are all different but they're all important. It's just like that with [the other] teachers. It's important to have access to a variety of teachers. But I have to figure out who my "friends" are and what roles they will play. (First year teacher)

How does this comment from Jillian resonate with what Barth (1990) has to say about adult interactions in schools?

> It is impossible to serve teachers by excluding them. . . . Everyone has an "inner light," something to offer the group, if given the opportunity. And every member has something to learn from others. Members work together as equals, sharing ideas, planning, giving feedback, and supporting each other in new efforts. Leaders emerge in various ways at various times and then give way to other leaders. (p. 143)

These authors point to at least four issues that have particular relevance to the topic of teacher development in the workplace: self-socialization, colleagueship, community, and opportunity. In this paper I will explore the connection between workplace relationships and teacher development. Using a conceptual framework built on Brim's (1966) ideas on self-socialization and Erickson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development I draw on information gathered in year one of a two year qualitative study of teacher socialization to explore the following

questions: With whom do beginning teachers form relationships in their new professional contexts? What is the nature of these relationships? What functions do they serve? Are some relationships more important at some times than others? How do certain relationships facilitate or constrain the various aspects of teacher development? Can facilitating relationships be contrived? Can contrived relationships be facilitating? And, finally, what role does context play in all of this?

The focus on relationships grows out of a need to better understand the role of the "other" in the professional growth process. By examining information gathered through conversations with 13 new teachers I will uncover and explore some of the issues pertaining to professional relationship formation and development particularly in relation to teacher socialization and the psychosocial aspects of teacher development. These insights will be used as a basis for a discussion of formalized induction programs which feature forms of institutionally imposed collaborative arrangements. Drawing on some of the recent work on teacher culture and collegiality (Hargreaves, 1990; Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1987, 1989), Barth's (1990) ideas on school improvement through the creation of a "community of learners", and on Noddings' (1986) and Gherke's (1987) notions on the building of caring and helping communities, I will discuss the limitations of some of the recent trends in professional development for new teachers. I will recommend an alternative approach to new teacher induction, one that takes into account the individuality of the teacher, the school culture, and the socialization process. In essence, I will argue for a "natural" and integrated approach to teacher induction.

Background

Transition to Teaching

When new teachers leave their preservice program to become part of a new and different reality of classrooms and schools they begin a period of socialization into a new

community. Students, parents, administrators, support staff, senior teachers, and other beginning teachers in the school; administrators, support staff, and other colleagues outside the school; associates from the university and from professional associations; not to mention family, friends, and others in the local community outside the school are all potential socializing agents in the beginning teacher's new lifeworld.

For many new teachers, the initial socialization period--those first few weeks, months, and even years of life as a teacher--is fraught with personal and professional trials. For many, the transition from campus to classroom marks the beginning of a whole new period in their personal as well as professional development. It can be a challenging and often exacting time. It is a time when new teachers experience frustrations and fulfilments, discover shortcomings and strengths, learn to celebrate highs and accept lows of professional life. It is a time of constant testing and being tested. It is a time when new relationships are sought, initiated, worried over, developed, maintained, and sometimes undone.

Administered Support

A renewed awareness of and concern over the often traumatic nature of the transition to teaching has resulted in a surge of interest in the development and implementation of programs of assistance and support for new teachers. In most cases, a central feature of these induction programs is some kind of formalized "collegial" arrangement between two teachers either in the form of a mentor-protege relationship or in some kind of peer support situation. One example of such a program is a "mandated peer support process", instituted in some of the United States, which requires teachers by law to engage in collegial interaction. This kind of effort, tied to the certification of new teachers, is based on the rationale that "colleagueship" has a positive influence on teacher performance. By "providing opportunities" for experienced and beginning teachers to interact in ways significantly different from traditional patterns of interaction (i.e. with emphasis on peer support) it is expected that new

teachers will make an easier entry and be more likely to remain in teaching.

Another less extreme example is a type of formalized but not mandated mentorship program. These programs, in their various forms, are prevalent in schools throughout North America and beyond. In a typical mentoring program a new teacher is assigned to an experienced teacher usually in the same school and of close geographical proximity within the school and of the same grade level or subject area. The mentor assumes a variety of roles and responsibilities related to the new teacher's orientation, socialization, and professional growth providing various forms of on the job assistance and support.

It seems somewhat paradoxical, perhaps to some extent futile, and maybe even inappropriate to contrive relationships in order to ensure that assistance and support are delivered. It seems so unnatural. It seems so exclusionary. Quaglia and Rog's (1989) report on a state mandated peer support program is illustrative, though not surprising. Of the 18 beginning teachers participating in the peer support process they studied, not one formed what they referred to as a "significant relationship" with the assigned support team teacher. The significant relationships that developed (and all teachers indicated that they had formed a significant relationship with at least one other teacher) resulted instead from self-selection. This is not to suggest that assigned partnerships are never successful, meaningful, or beneficial. Indeed, reports of successful and facilitative relationships abound (e.g. Huffman & Leak, 1986; Killion, 1990; Shulman & Colbert, 1988). It is to suggest, however, that there are limitations to how facilitative and "significant" assigned partnerships can be. It is also to suggest that even successful partnerships should be considered only as **means**, albeit potentially powerful ones, to the achievement of a larger and more complex **end** of establishing and sustaining helping and caring communities of learners.

There is a moral component to the assignment of partnerships that is of particular concern to me--a question of moral and ethical responsibility both to the teachers engaged in

the partnership and to the other members of the professional community into which the new teacher is being introduced. Assigned partnerships usually have a particular focus and purpose (orientation, technical assistance, resource, in some cases improved performance, etc.). Even though such relationships often extend beyond their initially defined boundaries, defining and facilitating teacher growth in this way does not necessarily ensure that opportunities are provided for development in other areas. How reasonable is it to expect any one teacher to be all things to any other teacher? In addition, the assignment of a "designated helper" can imply that the newcomer is "being looked after". As a result, others in the community are alleviated of any responsibility to the new individual and, unfortunately for them, also are not afforded any opportunity to benefit from all the newcomer brings to the community.

This paper is an inquiry into the "defensibility" of assigned partnership programs. It is not an evaluation per se; rather, it is an inquiry about relationships that form and develop naturally in the workplace and their impact on teacher development within the school context. In an earlier study (Cole, 1990b) I examined, through the eyes of three beginning teachers, the diversity of personal perspectives on professional relationships and on teacher development in the workplace. Although Jillian was not part of that study her comments reflect the sentiments of those other three beginning teachers. As persons and professionals they related to their professional situations in ways that reflected their individuality. Their socialization and development was contingent not upon the provision of an appropriate support program but rather upon their interpretation and experience of their contextual reality. The context in which the new teachers worked and the many people with whom they interacted all influenced, in important ways, their professional development. In this paper I further explore this notion of self-socialization as it relates to new teachers and their transition to teaching and their development in the formative years.

Theoretical Framework

Self-Socialization

In 1966, the sociologist, Brim, advanced a theory about self-socialization. He maintained that because adults exercise a certain amount of control over their own environments they select from any given community of potential socializing agents those who, for any number of reasons, seem appropriate to facilitate their socialization into that community. I will argue that self-socialization is a necessary part of a new teacher's transition to teaching and contributes in important ways to the psychosocial aspects of their development.

Psychosocial Development

According to Erickson (1963), human development is a sequence of eight stages from infancy to maturity in which certain aspects of the personality come to the fore. Because development occurs within a broad social context which includes the individual and significant others in relation to the wider socio-cultural setting, Erickson's is a psycho-social theory. Healthy development requires the successive resolution of dichotomous dilemmas or "emotional crises" naturally arising from ongoing interaction with the social environment. Each crisis carries with it "developmental opportunities" for positive resolution.

The latter three stages of Erickson's theory are particularly relevant to the development of teachers. I will consider teacher development as contingent upon the resolution of: identity versus role confusion; intimacy versus isolation; and generativity versus stagnation; and discuss various ways in which developmental opportunities for positive resolution might be provided in the workplace. I am not suggesting a stage theory of teacher development; rather, I am suggesting that these significant crises occur during the process of becoming a teacher and, further, that of the variety of needs and concerns new teachers experience attendance to psychosocial needs is of primary importance and essential to development in other areas.

Assumptions

Three main assumptions about individuality underpin the study. First, is a view of **teaching and teacher development** as a complex and ongoing process of personal and contextual interpretation. Teachers, as individuals, express their individuality as they interact with and within their professional contexts--with the curriculum, with the classroom itself, with the students, and with administration, colleagues, and friends within and outside the school.

The second assumption reflects the individuality and complexity of the school context. Schools exist as individual and distinct institutional entities, each defined by and imbued with a complex and shared set of meanings that constitute the **school culture.**

These two assumptions lead to the third that **teacher socialization**, too, is an interpretive and interactive process-- an expression of the interplay between a new teacher and the professional context into which he or she is being introduced.

Methodology

The data informing this paper is taken from information gathered in an ongoing study of teacher socialization situated in three elementary schools and one secondary school in a public school board in southwestern Ontario, Canada. This school board, like many others, is experiencing a dramatic change in staffing patterns and expects to continue to hire a large number of new teachers each year for the next several years. Teacher induction, consequently, has become a priority for this board. Four "pilot" schools are involved in a two-phased research and development project organized around notions of new teacher support. The project is based on a participatory planning model (Bach & Morley, 1987) of program development. This model places, at the centre of the process, those "inside" the setting who are affected by and have a stake in the problems and issues. The participatory planning model places emphasis on: the utilization of existing internal human resources and local leadership capacities; incorporating the introduction of external knowledge and experience without

threatening local control and ownership of the process; local development that is contextually relevant; and on encouraging the continuation of a participatory development process. In order to take into account the individuality and complexity of the program, the schools, and the participants the ongoing study of these pilot programs has taken the form of a naturalistic inquiry. The study of relationships in the workplace is part of this larger inquiry.

Two similar but complementary methodological approaches are being used to gather information in each school. The methods of "vignettes" and "pre-structured cases" (Miles, 1990) to gather contextual information is supplemented by regular individual in-depth interviews and/or small group discussions with the project participants and more intensive observations within each school. The governing questions stated above are among those that continue to guide both forms of data collection. All observations are recorded by field notes; all interviews by audiotape. To address the topic of this paper, I concentrate on one of the four schools and 13 of the new teachers working there. Throughout the paper I quote generously from information gathered over a seven month period during the first year of the project. All 13 teachers are represented in the passages I have selected but only when the excerpt is of a conversation do I use names (pseudonyms) to distinguish speakers.

In order to understand the connection between workplace relationships and teacher development we need to consider our questions "in context" so welcome to . . .

Riverside School

Riverside Public School is located in a small but developing town in southwestern Ontario. It is the largest elementary school (kindergarten to grade five) in the Board and, parallel with the town's growth, has undergone significant changes over the last two years. An unanticipated increase in student population from 367 to 577 necessitated a 175% increase in teaching staff, and a physical addition in the form of a 14 room "port-a-pak" that one teacher jokingly described as "something resembling a hospital corridor, though an improvement over

having three classes in the gym." The new portable unit is self-contained and unattached to the main school building so in appearance the school is in two sections. Extra effort is made, however, to encourage whole staff interaction and keep the two buildings operating as an integral whole.

Of the 24 new teachers, 15 hold probationary contracts (meaning that they are either new to the board or brand new to teaching), several have transferred from other schools within the Board but may be new to a grade level or subject area, and three have returned to teaching after a lengthy absence (usually to raise their children). Thirteen of the probationary teachers have been directly involved in the pilot project participating in individual interviews and group discussions.

The Administrative Team

Because of its size, Riverside is the only elementary school in the Board with a full-time vice-principal (Fran) who does not have teaching responsibilities. Together with the school principal (Karen) they make up the only female administrative team in the Board. Two years ago they, too, were new to Riverside (though not new to administration). Karen and Fran described by several as "the best" are trusted, respected, and admired by all the new teachers (and presumably the others as well). One teacher told me that Riverside School has "a reputation for getting along so well." Ask any teacher at Riverside how this has come about and chances are the response will point to the administration--"definitely, the administration."

School Philosophy

The "Mission Statement" of the school captures its essence and spirit. Of the six goals that comprise the mission statement, two have particular relevance to the topic at hand:

> 5. To look upon ourselves as a group of professionals who are here to learn from and help one another. Thus may we pull together as a team to foster the most eager, independent, well rounded learners possible at Riverside.

6. To strive for a balance in curriculum and a happy environment where school spirit is apparent.

Team work and school spirit are the order of every day. One day, upon arrival at the school, I was greeted by Fran and Karen modelling the new "school hats"--fluorescent green baseball caps. On another occasion I noticed that, in response to several requests, one of the regular school newsletters carried an announcement about placing orders for School Sportswear. And "the first ever" school pins were handed out to all teachers during one of the many social events. But the best depiction of Riverside School is found in The New Teacher Rap composed and performed by the group of new teachers during a project "celebration night". In its entirety and with permission:

THE NEW TEACHER RAP

Riverside School is the place to be
From 9:00 a.m. till half past three
You'll find we are an excellent school
Where growth and change have been the rule.

New. New. We're brand new.

In June '89, 3-6-7 was our score
But now, you see, we've got lots more
5-7-7's our number to be exact
A staff of 37, now that's a fact.

New. New. We're brand new.

And new staff, too; not just old pros of course
24 new teachers have joined the force
In the last two years and that's not all
We got a new port-a-pak in the fall.

New. New. We're brand new.

Karen and Fran are at the top
And their support will never stop
If you have a problem, you just ask
And one of them will help you with your task.

New. New. We're brand new.

Those two ladies pave the way
So we want to stay and not run away
Being new to the team isn't quite so bad
In fact being at Riverside makes us glad.

New. New. We're brand new.

A great big plus at our school
Is sharing of the golden rule
We work together. Hey, what a team
We'll share ideas for each new theme.

New. New. We're brand new.

As you can tell we love this place
Working here puts a smile on your face
So who knows one day, one of you
Will be so lucky to join us too.

New. New. We're brand new. Yeah!!!

Becoming a Teacher in Riverside School

The new teachers in Riverside School, like most other new teachers, expressed the kinds of needs and concerns that have been described by Veenman (1984) and Odell (1989) as typical of first year teachers. For example, they all talked about their need for: information about school and board policy, procedures, and routines and how to access materials and resources; advice on and help with technical and pedagogical aspects of teaching (e.g. classroom management, responding to individual differences, writing report cards and long range plans, and communicating with parents); ideas and suggestions for curriculum; emotional support and encouragement particularly during the more stressful times such as "the dreaded evaluations" by the principal. But their talk went beyond describing how they address various needs, concerns, and problems. They also talked about how they were able to grow and become more comfortable, confident, and better teachers. In short, they talked about their development, their becoming.

For the remainder of this section I will focus on what I consider to be the psychosocial aspects of teacher development and consider the developmental opportunities that have been provided these 13 new teachers and how these opportunities have facilitated their becoming. Central to each aspect of development is the role of workplace relationships.

Psychosocial Development

Identity versus Role Confusion

According to Erickson an individual needs developmental opportunities to experiment with various roles in order to achieve a positive resolution of identity. Failure to resolve may result in confusion, "an identity crisis". Likewise, new teachers need to be provided opportunities to take risks and make mistakes, and engage in self-exploration of values, beliefs, and goals. They also need to establish themselves as "professionals" and "real" teachers.

A large part of establishing oneself as a teacher involves defining and organizing one's own space. At Riverside this was difficult given the general shortage of space and particularly space that could pass as legitimate classroom space (e.g. before the portable unit arrived three teachers had to set up their classrooms in the gymnasium and one in the library area) and the scarcity of supplies and support materials. Sensitive to this need, Fran spent time with all the new teachers who were suffering from the supply and space shortage ordering materials and planning for the arrival of the new unit. When it finally did arrive there was such excitement, one teacher recounted

> When I was told one night that we would be able to move the next day I said, "I'm moving tonight." I had to get in there and put up my bulletin boards, put the desks in, and get everything in order. I wanted the children to come and know that this is our space. This is how it's going to be.

New teachers need to develop confidence in many areas. They need to have their ideas, attitudes, and behaviours validated and questions answered. At Riverside this validation is provided in a variety of ways. The principal and vice-principal perform that important function for many new teachers.

> What I can't get over is how open to questions [the administrators] both are. At times I feel like they must think, "Here she comes again." but there are so many things I just don't know because I'm new. I bet there have been days when I've been [at the office] four or five times. They are so patient and open to questions. It's really nice being

> able to just pop in with a question or a problem of any kind. It's so good to hear them reinforcing a lot of the things you do but aren't quite sure about.

Another reflected

> I'm sure I've asked some really idiotic questions, things that an experienced teacher would probably know. And things that you would ordinarily go and ask a neighbour, not a principal. But I go and ask [the principal] anything. I'm sure she does some double-takes sometimes but she never makes you feel bad or stupid. No one does.

Remarked another

> It's just a warm feeling. They all understand what we're going through. You can say one comment like, "I'm swamped with work" and right away someone sympathizes with you. You don't feel like your whining or complaining. You feel like people honestly understand. Not only will they understand, they'll try to help.

For new teachers, feeling like a valued member of a group means a lot. A sense of belonging is important. One new teacher remarked that she had been made to feel so welcome and comfortable that she felt that she had been there forever, not "like the new kid at all." Another commented

> The teachers who have been here a while look at us [new ones] as "Oh wow, new blood!" They're excited about that. They don't look at us like young upstarts. They don't think they know everything. They even come to us for advice, for ideas, even though they've been teaching 20 years longer. It makes you feel good.

Being a new teacher is risky business. New teachers hold two-year probationary contracts made permanent by satisfactory performance appraisals conducted by the school principal (or designate). Some say that it is only upon receipt of a permanent contract that they feel like "an official teacher". It is not easy to feel secure enough to take risks and engage in any kind of self-discovery when your future is at stake. Yet, that is what new teachers are encouraged to do.

Being evaluated is a much dreaded and anxiety-ridden experience for new teachers. At Riverside, steps are taken to alleviate as much as possible stress associated with evaluation.

Early in the year, the new teachers and principal met for an informal information session to discuss the evaluation format and procedure and to deal explicitly with any concerns and anxieties. On an ongoing basis, though, there is an attempt to diffuse the trepidation associated with visits from the administrators.

> By popping in and out all the time [the administrators] get an idea of your classroom and what you're trying to do. If it's a one time thing they won't really know what I'm doing or it might be a bad day. If they're in and out all the time and they see the flow of things it's very helpful. . . .
>
> And even if you do have a bad day they're really supportive. They talk about how they felt when they were new and about some of the qualms they still have. It makes you feel better when you know it's not just the beginning people, it's everybody, and that teaching is a learning process. You get this nice feeling of growth and continuation. It's a nice feeling.

> [The principal] walks in and out of my room so much already that it's perfectly natural, for the kids and for me, for her to be here. Even still, when she comes to evaluate I live in fear and dread. Imagine what it would be like if she were different!

Intimacy versus Isolation

New teachers need developmental opportunities to form attachments and develop relationships with others, relationships based on trust, respect, concern, and caring. Lack of such opportunity may result in withdrawal, isolation, or alienation. And we are all too familiar with the repercussions of teacher isolation especially with respect to professional growth (e.g. Little, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1987, 1989). When new teachers become isolated in their work

> their capacity for growth is limited almost entirely to trial-and-error learning. They must rely primarily on their own ability to diagnose problems, to develop solutions, and to choose the best alternative. With little access to role models among their peers, they rely on memories of good teachers they recall from their own student experiences

> instead of gaining substantive knowledge from their more expert or experienced colleagues. That is, there is little exchange of any pre-existing body of practical knowledge--an already developed discourse--that could help teaching novices interpret and improve recurrent classroom problems. (Rosenholtz, 1987, p. 23)

New teachers, though often not prepared for the culture of individualism (Hargreaves, 1990; Lortie, 1975) that has become the tradition in most schools, soon learn to adopt accepted workplace norms and settle in to patterns of isolated work based on what Little (1990) calls "weak collegial relations."

Most teachers are not provided developmental opportunities for successful resolution of the intimacy versus isolation dilemma. The teachers at Riverside are exceptions to that rule.

The completion of long range plans is another one of those threatening and anxiety-producing tasks new teachers are required to complete. At Riverside, one teacher described this otherwise frustrating and often tearful task as "fun."

> We did a marathon one night--ordered pizza and did them together by grade level. It worked well. It was fun. By doing it as a group with people who had been with the Board for a while you're getting all that experience plus they knew what was expected and the proper format, etc. When people are helpful and supportive and have a positive attitude it makes a big difference. In this school people have the attitude, "We'll get through this and things will work out." It's a nice feeling for someone coming in new.

The group planning sessions involving new and experienced teachers were affirming for many new teachers. "Having other teachers say, 'I teach it that way too' just reinforces what you're doing. It makes you feel more secure if other people who have been teaching for a long time can confirm what you're doing."

For others, group planning was a clarifying experience.

> You have to be accountable to parents so in many ways [the group planning] made me more familiar with the curriculum. As a new teacher it was a good exercise. I had looked through the curriculum guides before but I really had never discussed and

talked about the objectives and things. It put me more in mind with what the children were capable of doing and what I was supposed to be doing.

I used to teach grade eight in another school. I wrote my own plans. There was a lot more work because I had to write every subject as well. This is different. We did long range planning as a group. I was consulting with four other teachers. It was a really good experience because it showed me some of the things they were doing and it was a chance to get to know them. . . . It was a common thing that brought us together to do something. It was a lot of give and take and coming to terms and consensus.

"[The experienced teachers] are there to help you work out the bugs too. There's no pressure but help is there if we want it. That's heaven for a first year teacher because lots of times you don't know where to go or what to do next." The importance of having support without pressure was echoed by a few. One new teacher described a situation that she found particularly noteworthy.

[The teacher] across the hall has seen me doing things that she knows won't work out. She has this way of coming in and saying, "Have you considered this or that?" and suddenly it will click. But she doesn't have to do that. She's been teaching for 22 years. Sometimes I'll come in and there will be a handout sitting on my desk with a little note attached saying something like, "Use this if you think it will work." There's no pressure. It's just there if I want it. I don't feel that I have to use it this year. I can put in the file. Lots of times you don't know where to go for things. She does that all the time. She's constantly giving me things and coming in and saying, "What are you planning? Let's see what you've you got." and just helping work things out.

Sometimes, though not always easy, internal coverage is arranged to allow for inter-classroom visitations. Many of the new teachers talk appreciatively of how the vice-principal tries to cover their classes to allow them to observe in other teachers' classrooms. One teacher told about the time she went to the vice-principal requesting help with her math class. To

allow sufficient observation time, a supply teacher was brought in to cover as many of the teacher's classes as she felt she needed.

New surroundings, new colleagues, and so many new responsibilities often leave new teachers feeling ill at ease and uncertain about how to fit in and cope with all that is so new. Very often they are not sure whether asking questions is an acceptable thing to do. This is not the case at Riverside.

> Being a new person here I don't really feel like a stranger. They've been very friendly and open and sort of glad you're here. You don't feel afraid of asking for anything from anybody. . . . I go to the experienced teachers for things that I really don't know, like "Why aren't my kids reading yet?" and they would say, "It takes time or whatever." I go to the brand new teachers when I'm feeling swamped with something or if I'm not feeling good about something. So curriculum kind of stuff I usually go to the experienced teachers; other kinds of things, to the new teachers.

> What you really need is just someone to talk to, someone to go and share ideas with, to talk about your children with to see if they're reacting the same way as yours, just maybe little problems or concerns. That's what I really like about this school. The staff is very helpful.

Developmental opportunities for the formation of supportive, collegial relationships also allow for the successful resolution of the last of Erickson's dilemmas. The achievement of professional intimacy is coupled with professional growth and renewal.

Generativity versus Stagnation

"The professional growth of teachers is closely related to relationships within schools, between teacher and principal, and between teacher and teacher. . . . Great untapped opportunities for the professional development of teachers reside within the school." (Barth, 1990, p.50) At Riverside, opportunities abound for individual self-renewal, for the realization of individual potential through self-exploration, reflection, and sharing of craft knowledge. Barth (1990), among others, would call Riverside "a collegial school" where "adults and students

are constantly learning because everyone is a staff developer for everyone else;" a place where "teachers and principals talk with one another about practice, observe one another engaged in their work, share their craft knowledge with each other, and actively help each other become better." (p. 163)

At the beginning of their second year the administrative team initiated some physical restructuring to provide better opportunities and encouragement for teacher-teacher interactions. Much of the sharing and communication that takes place was made possible by the clustering of classrooms according to grade level or subject area. A program of "book buddies" brings classes together and gives the teachers an opportunity to interact and to visit each other's classrooms. Morning Moos (regular special recess breaks hosted by different teachers in their classrooms), Bring and Brag Sessions (lunch time or after school opportunities for teachers to informally exchange good ideas), and Coffee, Cookies and Curriculum (informal after school sessions to which various Curriculum Consultants are invited) are but a few of the ways in which sharing and reflection are encouraged at Riverside.

"Proximity's a big thing," commented one teacher. " It's so simple but so big. Because I'm surrounded by other grade three teachers we can borrow each others' books for even ten minutes and give them right back. We're sharing books and things for classes right there."

Openness of attitude and in some cases of physical space is prevalent throughout Riverside. Consequently, teachers have been able to benefit from mutual sharing of ideas, materials, knowledge, and support. Several teachers speak:

> With my library background and her teaching background she can pop in and say, "How do you do this for Library?" and I start feeling good because I can answer these questions. Then I'll say, "What about this?" and she hands me things that she's used. It's wonderful that way.

> What's really saving me is the fact that there are other people here. If it hadn't been for [the other kindergarten teachers] I would have been going crazy. As it is I'm making everything up and I've got lots of good ideas but I'd have to be doing even

more if I didn't have them. All I need to say is "Have you got anything on...?" and they give you their whole unit plans or whatever they have and you just pick and choose.

You go to different people for different things. You kind of just pick them. Off the top of my head I can think of at least four people I go to for different things.

I go asking. At recess time I go from room to room and talk and see what's on other people's boards and what they're doing. If I see something interesting I'll ask how they got it going or whatever.

At lunch time, I'll go visiting. I'll sit and eat my lunch in one of the other teacher's rooms while she's cleaning up and we'll talk about what we did today and what we're trying to do. We'll exchange things and try to do things together or I'll steal her ideas or she'll steal mine.

We [taught] units [themes] together. Seven of the teachers got together and we rotated the children. Kindergarten joined in and grade one and grade two. That was really helpful because we had [the children] all mixed up so the grade two's could help the one's and so on.

I conclude this section and introduce the next with yet another quote from Barth:

> How can a profession survive, let alone flourish, when its members are cut off from each other and from the rich knowledge base upon which success and excellence depend? Not very well. Professional isolation stifles professional growth. There can be no community of learners when there is no community and when there are no learners. (1990, p.18)

Riverside School: A Caring and Helping Community of Learners

Caring and Helping Communities

Caring and helping are natural and self-motivated ways of being and relating. Gherke (1987) encourages the creation of a new "helping community" for teachers both new and experienced. It is essential, she says, for assuring "sustained care." A helping community, according to Gherke, is one in which "a group of teachers, administrators, and support staff members in a school who have been helped themselves to such a degree and in such ways that they all see helping as an inherent part of their roles with newcomers and oldtimers" (p. 110).

Helping communities would be based on what Noddings (1986) calls "an ethic of care" that will guide us to focus not on subject matter or skills acquisition or other abstract or apersonal goals but on the effects these might have on the persons involved and on the caring community we should be trying to build. "Such an ethic", says Noddings, "takes fidelity to persons as primary and directs us to questions concerning the maintenance of community, the growth of individuals, and the enhancement of subjective aspects of our relationships" (p. 510).

Riverside School is a caring and helping community. At about halfway through their first term of teaching this is how four beginning teachers described life at Riverside.

Janet: It's the work environment. The climate here is really good.

Elaine: This staff--everybody--is so cooperative. That's what makes this school. Everybody interacts together really well and shares everything. It's so nice.

Sandra: The framework for the school is team work, helping each other out. It's a team atmosphere here.

Janet: It's heaven. It's like a dream come true for me. My job is nuts right now. I am overloaded with stuff including the number of students I can realistically handle but having a good working environment makes it okay. You can handle any problems, not knowing what you're doing and things like that. . . .

Everybody's got time for you. It doesn't matter when it is, during their lunch hour, after school, people are always helping.

Jack: The principal and vice-principal have been excellent. I can't say I have ever met two more helpful people. Without them behind you, it would have been very difficult. They have been 100% supportive and I think that is the key.

Contrast the experiences of these new teachers with others we have met through earlier studies. For example, in one I conducted (Cole, 1990a), we met Elizabeth whose exacting first year in an unsupportive setting prompted her to change school, grade level, and even school board to get a fresh start. In Thiessen's (1991) study we were introduced to Allison who, like Elizabeth, transferred to another school her second year in order to give herself a chance to develop her potential and become the kind of teacher she knew she could and wanted to be. The experiences of Kerrie, the first year teacher about whom Bullough's (1989) book is written, and countless others like her could easily comprise a volumed set of First Year Teacher Horror Stories. All of these teachers had one thing in common--they did not spend their first year in a caring and helping work setting like Riverside.

Colleagueship and Authenticity

One can hardly scan the contents of any professional or scholarly education journal without meeting the words "collegiality" or "collaboration" at least once. Although there is considerable agreement that collaboration and collegiality are good things, agreement about what "they" are is considerably less. Little (1990) describes "collegiality" as remaining "conceptually amorphous and ideologically sanguine" (p. 509). Recent trends in professional development, especially for new teachers, fashioned on assumptions about collegiality being a good thing, usually involve some kind of arrangement of partnerships between teachers. Earlier in this paper I raised questions about the defensibility of such programmed arrangements. I now add questions about the authenticity of these so-called supportive and collegial ways of working together. I wonder about the motivations for these new working conditions and arrangements, their effects on those involved, and their effectiveness in

facilitating teacher development. Are externally imposed relationships, both in design and development, based on what Noddings (1985) would call "an ethic of caring" or are they more technically-driven and entirely other-motivated? To what extent can programmed relationships facilitate teacher development? And can we expect them to lead to the development of the kind of "helping communities" described by Gherke (1987)?

As Little (1990) has observed, the prospects for the influence on individuals and organizations of various forms of induced collaboration

> rest in part on their congruence with established norms of interaction or conflict with the meaningful reference groups with which teachers align themselves. At issue here is the congruence or fit between naturally occurring relations among teachers and those collaboratives that emerge in the course of institutionally sponsored initiatives. (p. 530)

The assignment of support roles, then, seems like a ludicrous undertaking. If such arrangements are only truly facilitative and authentic when they align with naturally occurring relations, why would we make artificial that which occurs naturally? It would make more sense to strive not for the creation of effective partnerships but rather for the creation of caring and helping communities of learners.

Assigned partnerships may be able to assist with some aspects of a new teacher's development needs (e.g. information, techniques, certain pedagogical needs) but the psychosocial aspects of development result from interaction of the individual and the broader community context. The teachers in this study identified numerous sources of help and support commenting repeatedly on the importance of being able to turn to a variety of people for a variety of needs or reasons. And because the school itself is so supportive overall an attempt to institute a "buddy" system went down in defeat!

Just as Erickson argued a psychosocial theory to explain the development of the self or ego, I would argue that the process of becoming a teacher depends on the development of psychosocial aspects of the teaching self. Thus, teachers need a wide range of developmental opportunities within the community setting. Rather than worrying about developing and refining sophisticated professional development programs with careful adherence to proper

implementation strategies, we should be concentrating on what Sarason (1972) would call "the creation of a setting." We should strive towards the creation of, for example, a helping community where new teachers would feel cared for and would understand what it means to care and be cared for. These teachers would then naturally perpetuate these norms of caring and helping by adopting patterns of behaviour based on them. When caring and helping become psychosocial and behavioural norms in the workplace, that is, the natural way of being and doing there is no need to be concerned about the development of formalized programs of assistance and support. Teachers will be **doing what comes naturally**. I conclude with this interchange between Janet and Elaine. It captures the essence of my argument.

Janet: We have this system where you can pick a buddy at the beginning of the year so that if you have any specific problems you can go and talk to that teacher. I haven't done that because I just talk to everybody. Most people are like me, I think. They'll go to whoever is closest or who is most likely to be able to help you with your particular problem or question.

Elaine: And I think [the vice-principal] had some reservations about pairing us with someone anyway. People tend to find their **natural** cohorts. Sometimes it's just **unnatural** if you're paired by a third party. Anyway, I think [the administration] asked for volunteers for this buddy thing and every single person on staff put their name down, including the new teachers!

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